

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, if I may just finish.

We are here again. I will come back again to the floor to seek this Iron Dome money.

Many of us are absolutely determined that the United States fulfill this moral, humanitarian, and foreign policy obligation. It is in our strategic interest.

This obligation is paid for; it is not debt; and it will incur no obligations that are unpaid for. So I regret that my colleague, again, has blocked this from proceeding.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

NOMINATION OF MARIA L. PAGAN

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, in a few minutes, I will be putting forward a unanimous consent request asking the Senate to take up and approve a highly qualified and noncontroversial nominee.

I will just take a couple of minutes to talk about Maria Pagan, nominated to be the next Deputy U.S. Trade Representative in Geneva. There are a few key points to make about the nominee, as well as the critical role she will serve representing the United States at the World Trade Organization to get a better deal for American workers, farmers, and businesses.

To start, Ms. Pagan isn't new to high-pressure, high-profile negotiations. She is currently deputy general counsel at the U.S. Trade Representative's Office, the person called in when issues are particularly challenging. She has taken on these difficult issues during numerous trade agreement negotiations, including the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement. She was in lock-step with Members of Congress who pushed hard to guarantee that the commitments laid out in the USMCA were fully and quickly enforceable, a key priority for protecting American jobs.

She has been a longtime public servant, spending 30 years in government. She has served both Republican and Democratic administrations at the Department of Commerce and at USTR. She is an expert on a host of issues from trade in services to government procurement, and she has litigated several disputes before the WTO.

She is highly qualified. She is a nominee who brings the two sides of the Senate together. The Finance Committee vote on her nomination was 27 to 1.

I would just say, at this point in time, that is about as good as it gets.

Colleagues, I have said before that it is crucial to get qualified people to the office representing the United States

around the world. It is important to have these skilled individuals working on behalf of our workers, our businesses, and our interests. This nomination is particularly important to me.

It is no secret that the World Trade Organization, which can be a valuable institution, is not today functioning as it needs to. The rules that underpin the WTO were crafted more than two decades ago. These 20th century rules have simply not kept up with 21st century technology.

Meanwhile, the Chinese Government has learned to game the system. It does so routinely at the expense of hard-working American families.

As a result, the process of leveling the playing field with trade rules based on fairness have been overtaken by the exploitation of loopholes and rip-offs. In many cases, that comes at the direct expense of American workers and American businesses.

With her decades of experience, Ms. Pagan understands these challenges as well as anyone. From day one after her confirmation, she will hit the ground running to lead our allies in fighting back.

For example, one area that I feel particularly strongly about is that new rules are desperately needed to deal with subsidized fisheries. Harmful subsidies are allowing fleets to reach distant shores of less developed countries like Ecuador and Ghana. They are stripping the ocean of fish without regard to species or regulations or basic decency. These highly subsidized, poorly regulated fleets rely on abhorrent labor practices—including forced labor. Worst of all, their catch ends up in American supermarkets and on American tables.

Oregon fishing families who trade in fairly and sustainably caught U.S. salmon, pollack, and other fish simply should not be asked to compete against that kind of horrendous cheating.

Negotiations on this issue have been dragging on for over 20 years, and I can tell you, the 20 years have not improved the situation for our oceans and for our families.

The 12th Ministerial Conference, which was delayed last week due to the new COVID variant, is another really important chance to get these negotiations finally done. The outcome has to be strong. It can't open, once again, harmful new loopholes.

These meetings have been rescheduled to the spring. The United States needs tough, smart leadership at the table. Ms. Pagan, with her years of negotiation, is just the closer, just the kind of person the United States needs.

There are no shortages of other issues that Ms. Pagan will have to tackle at the World Trade Organization, from institutional reform to dispute settlement, to e-commerce. The United States needs a leader who can work with our allies to get it all done. She is the right woman for the job.

Maria Pagan is a highly qualified, experienced nominee. She is a proven ne-

gotiator, a strong advocate for workers, farmers, and businesses. She comes, as I have indicated, with strong, 27-to-1, bipartisan support in the Senate Finance Committee. There is just no justification for any delay in moving this nomination forward.

I will have more to say when I ask unanimous consent, briefly, in a bit.

And, at this moment, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

TRIBUTE TO DR. FRANCIS COLLINS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, it is a curious thing about tipping points in the quest for progress. Very often, the events that cleave history into "before" and "after" can seem insignificant when they happen. That might have been true 29 years ago, when the National Institutes of Health named a 42-year-old professor from the University of Michigan to direct one of NIH's newest cutting-edge institutes.

The professor's name was Francis Collins. The New York Times' account of his arrival ran 117 words.

His mission at NIH was to lead what we called then the Human Genome Project, an international quest to discover the genetic blueprint for human life. It was the scientific equivalent of the search for the Holy Grail. There were just as many skeptics as believers in that undertaking.

But less than 6 years later, in June 2000, the first mapping of the human genome was complete. Overnight, that obscure professor from Michigan, Francis Collins, became one of the most famous scientists in the world.

The decoding of the human genome was the achievement of a historic public-private partnership between the NIH's genome lab, headed by Dr. Collins and a private firm—a rival turned partner—founded by the genetic pioneer, Craig Venter. It involved hundreds of scientists from six nations. It remains one of the greatest advances in scientific knowledge in all of recorded history.

In a White House ceremony announcing the first sequencing of the human genome, Dr. Collins said he was humbled and awed by the discovery. In his words: "We have caught the first glimpses of our instruction book, previously known only to God."

Cracking the genetic code of human life has revolutionized science and medicine. It continues to yield profound medical discoveries all the time.

That historic discovery could have been the capstone of any career in science, but for Francis Collins, there was an amazing second act to follow.

In 2009, President Obama chose Francis Collins to lead the entire National Institutes of Health, the largest